

Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal

Volume 4 | Number 1

Article 7

January 2015

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Recommended Citation

Connor, Kimberly R. (2015) "Reflections on Building an Ignatian Pedagogy Faculty Learning Community and Creating Possibilities for AJCU Collaborations," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol4/iss1/7>

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Reflections on Building an Ignatian Pedagogy Faculty Learning Community and Creating Possibilities for AJCU Collaborations

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Abstract

During 2013-2014, the University of San Francisco's Center for Teaching Excellence launched its first effort to support faculty learning communities (FLC), a professional development opportunity that brings together faculty engaging in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum dedicated to enhancing teaching and learning. The *Learning Communities Journal* (<http://celt.miamioh.edu/lcj/>) presents the scholarship of teaching and learning devoted to these communities of practice and its editors trained inaugural facilitators at a two day conference. FLCs offer a relationship based (hence implicitly Ignatian) approach to solving problems and incubating ideas, including ideas on how to use Ignatian pedagogy to greater effect across academic programs at AJCU schools. Below I offer a brief history of our Ignatian Pedagogy FLC, divided into 3 stages: formation, participation, and presentation. I conclude with some recommendations that emerged out of our reflections that are relevant to all AJCU schools, including the development of a digital collection that we will present in a subsequent issue of *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*.

Summer 2013: Formation

While on sabbatical, I applied to facilitate an FLC on Ignatian pedagogy, choosing both a topic model and a cohort model, hoping this initiative could be a welcoming structure to apply to an investigation of the Ignatian character of the School of Management (SoM) at USF. At the time of the FLC formation, the school had gone through many leadership changes and mergers of different academic cultures and faculty were looking for common ground, hoping to build a working community that could contribute to the school's re-formation. Nearly a dozen faculty originally expressed interest but the core faculty who sustained the conversation over the year were primarily five faculty who had already gathered informally around these topics during and since our various participation as individuals in Western Conversations, Collegium, an El Salvador immersion trip, Jesuit Foundation programming, University Ministry trainings, and other programs of relevance to the Jesuit foundation of our schools. Also, we all had experience participating in Colleagues in Jesuit Business Education (CJBE) conferences and hoped to influence the upcoming conference in

2014 being hosted by USF. We recognized among ourselves a shared commitment to building an identity at SoM as a distinctive school of management that presents its curriculum from the perspective of Ignatian values. Our membership included: Kimberly Connor, Facilitator, Sonja Poole, Kevin Lo, Jennifer Walske, Paul Ryder as well as support from Courtney Tarry, (a graduate assistant who helped with data collection) and Shawn Northcutt (the videographer we hired with grant money awarded spring semester).

After attending a conference on FLCs with the director of the CTE and other facilitators, as the facilitator I did the following:

- Identified texts and readings for foundational knowledge in Ignatian pedagogy and ordered copies for all participants.
- Arranged an opening lunch for everyone to reacquaint under a new setting and to set the tone for the year.
- Built a Google Drive site to share readings, resources, and collaborative writings.

Fall 2013: Participation

We opened our conversations with a pedagogical question of how to apply Ignatian pedagogical principles (beginning with the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm) to the teaching of courses across programs at the School of Management.

Our community was interested in if and how faculty in the School of Management comprehend and apply Ignatian pedagogy; we wanted to identify and support the development of tools to encourage the application of an Ignatian pedagogical process of transformative education and to highlight its relevance for management education. We believed that by being mindful of and exercising Ignatian pedagogy we could continually maintain our standards as educators for others who build and strengthen community ties around a shared value of excellence in education while in the pursuit of justice.

Viewed through the lens of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, all learning is situated in a specific context that recognizes the uniqueness of each student and instructor; rooted in our previous experience and emerging from new learning experiences; dependent upon and deepened by our reflection on those experiences; made meaningful when we put our new knowledge into some kind of action; and reinforced by our explicit evaluation--and ultimately, self-evaluation--of our actions and an account of what we have learned and what we still long to learn.

Specifically, we wished to promote ways that we and our colleagues could:

- become intentional about incorporating Ignatian concepts into our pedagogy;
- identify what we are already doing that affirms Ignatian principles and highlight and deploy and share those activities and curricular designs;
- discern the most effective ways to use Ignatian/Jesuit principles and methods to provide an ethics component across the curriculum at SOM.

In sum, the major question we wanted our community to explore is: How is the School of

Management a reflection of the Jesuit principles on which the University is founded?

We typically began our sessions with an opening reflection on a reading, topic, or sometimes an event at SOM or in our personal lives. Quickly, however, we began developing a list of desired outcomes and jointly expanded our list of readings and resources. Here are some of the discussions and activities that characterized our first semester sessions:

- To get ideas and to avoid duplication, we began investigating Ignatian pedagogy by looking at pedagogical and organizational models from other Jesuit colleges and universities. The facilitator had already researched and participated in activities sponsored by Loyola University, Chicago's Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy and was inspired by this example to explore what other AJCU schools were doing. We also sought counsel and conversation with the Lane Center and University Ministry to identify other Ignatian initiatives on campus.
- Together, as a larger group, we engaged the services of an RA and with her help collaborated on building a Digital Collection as a resource for distribution to the larger campus community interested in engaging Ignatian Pedagogy.
- Each FLC member prepared a group and an individual outcome and we each critiqued and strengthened the vision of the other.
- We met with the Associate Dean at SoM responsible for the CJBE conference attended a session where we developed ideas for the conference that would take advantage of our FLC by highlighting pedagogy in the Jesuit tradition.
- We applied for and received a Jesuit Foundation grant to design, record, edit, and publish podcasts and short video interviews to be placed on the SOM website to engage the community by featuring speakers who are well known among our faculty who can not only articulate their own best practices but be acknowledged as thought leaders in Jesuit pedagogy and/or Ignatian spirituality. These leaders can then "spread the word" regarding the site and its content. Since none of the FLC members have skills in editing and

publishing podcasts and video, we needed to hire outside assistance to shape the format and produce the initial efforts.

Spring 2014: Presentation

The first part of the semester saw us extending our efforts at planning for the CJBE conference. We honed in on developing a survey instrument that we distributed at a faculty meeting during a short presentation. Because results were unsatisfying, we continued to develop the tool and then sent it out electronically, this time also inviting our colleagues to express interest in being interviewed for our video productions.

We also each refined our individual scholarship ideas and shared our progress. Other activities and achievements of our members in deploying the word about Ignatian pedagogy include:

- A presentation at a session of “And Still We Rise,” a semester long gathering of female identified faculty and staff, using Ignatian pedagogy to describe the student-teacher relationship.
- A presentation at the Graduate Level Community Engaged Learning Seminar that illustrated how service learning aligns with Ignatian pedagogy.
- A presentation on USF mission and Ignatian pedagogy using a Jesuit *Examen* in SOM’s undergraduate class, “Organizations and Systems.”
- A conference call with administrators and faculty at Loyola New Orleans about volunteering in the JCHEM Education at the Margins program and aligned with Ignatian pedagogy.
- Applied Ignatian pedagogy in an MPA recruiting webinar for students
- Wrote a short piece HowToLearn.com interpreting the changes in the SAT test through the lens of Ignatian pedagogy.
- Collaborated with staff building the Digital Measures faculty data tracking system adopted by SoM to build in Ignatian markers (with accompanying explanation) in categories of service, scholarship, and teaching.

- Worked with librarians Jessica Lu and Vicki Rosen to build the Practicing Ignatian Pedagogy digital collection
- Used the IPP in new student and adjunct orientations.
- Rewrote and saw adopted a new admissions state for students applying to the MPA/MNA program that asks them to write a reflective narrative where they align their values with Jesuit values and USF’s mission.
- Built an Ignatian reflection/*examen* for PA 650, the capstone course for MPA students.
- Directed Courtney Tarry, research assistant, in creating an annotated bibliography of Ignatian pedagogy resources across AJCU schools.
- Hired a videographer with Jesuit Foundation resources and created a concept and series of questions, vocabulary, and thematic points to use in creating and supervised interviews and production.

Post FLC: Continuation

Our members are committed to extending our work in promoting Ignatian pedagogy, most immediately we focused on the planning and operating of the CJBE conference which was a great success, particularly the video presentation. Ideas for follow up that we developed but which need additional context, funding, and administrative support include:

- Reflection Essays: For presentation and eventual publication, we hope to invite scholars to personally reflect on their interpretation of and creative application of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm for a collection of essays on “Accompanying the Student,” to be published in the series sponsored by USF’s Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought.
- Pedagogy Workshops: For a series of hands-on conversations about pedagogy, we invite presentations on “How to make (fill in the blank with your discipline, e.g. economics, marketing, accounting) more Ignatian.” We are interested in how applying the IPP changes the course, the instructor, and the students. This may take several forms.. You may wish to apply the IPP directly to the overall design of a course; or you may wish to

develop specific tools and techniques derived from Ignatian practice, such as reflection, discernment, *Examen*, or you may add an experiential dimension that engages students in the topic. You may illustrate how your course engages the fullest development of talents (intellectual, creative, etc.). You may propose a session focused on each step of the IPP as a theme: contexts, experience, such as service learning and immersion opportunities, reflection as a resource for scholarship and pedagogy, action, and especially valuation—techniques for assessing Ignatian awareness and achievement.

We expect individual and collective scholarship to come out of this conference as well as the first contributions to a collection of Ignatian pedagogy reflections by USF faculty that we are collaborating with the Lane Center to produce and which was described above.

We also hope to continue to meet informally to identify challenges to having conversations about Ignatian pedagogy: what are barriers towards using it and how do we lower them.

Finally, we hope to develop some practical tools and comfortable methods by which to help our colleagues appreciate how Ignatian pedagogy can transform their classrooms, wherever they are. This could include:

- Establishing a regular meeting outside of the formal FLC structure;
- Developing tools like an Ignatian rubric that we can use and share with our colleagues to make the more comfortable applying the IPP;
- Developing a workshop for SoM faculty (possibly to expand across campus) on how to “Jesuitfy” their syllabi.
- Developing Ignatian language for learning outcomes faculty can apply at the course, assignment, or program level;
- Creating database of courses that either used or could benefit from an Ignatian review and help colleagues who are interested in adapting their courses.

Pedagogical Practices

Our community’s first insight was becoming aware of how few faculty recognized, understood, or applied Ignatian pedagogy. We developed a survey tool that helped us arrive at this conclusion and we encourage other academic units to learn about their colleagues and themselves in this way. Even the process of building the survey is instructive and a kind of Ignatian practice of discernment: choosing carefully from among many options those prompts that best reveal truth. In addition to administering a survey tool of some sort, we recommend the following:

Administrative Opportunities to Build Ignatian Identity:

- When preparing your yearly review with your dean, highlight the Ignatian dimensions of your scholarship, service, and teaching. If possible, ask that any record, digital or otherwise, of your achievements also recognize your Ignatian efforts.
- When creating job descriptions for faculty and staff searches, include recognition of the school’s Jesuit identity and use the interview opportunity to ask questions that invite a candidate to reflect on how s/he who support this mission and make that support an important criteria in hiring.
- When orienting new faculty, including adjuncts, provide them with Ignatian resources, including a copy of “Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach.”
- When building application materials for academic programs, ask applying students to respond in a reflection piece to the USF mission and how that might shape their intellectual development and why learning to be “one for others” is a salient educational outcome.
- Shape departmental identity around disciplinary responses to Ignatian challenges and forms of inquiry and expression. Build Ignatian language into departmental curricula and pedagogies and strategic visions.
- Consider including an Ignatian intensive as part of the honors curriculum in your academic program. If you have a freshman seminar, make sure students are introduced to

Ignatian spirituality and resources for transformative learning.

- Use faculty development resources to support activities that build community in Jesuit ways, providing opportunity for reflection and engagement of many kinds that promote mission mindfulness.

Faculty Opportunities to Build Ignatian Identity

- When building a syllabus, include an Ignatian component as a reading, experiential engagement, writing exercise or field study, service learning or immersion experience, as a weekly *Examen*, or an extended reflection. Take time to explain the origins of the assignment and connect it back to USF's mission.
- Include Ignatian outcomes at the assignment, module, and class levels of your course.
- Teach discernment as an intellectually credible and helpful approach to decision-making.
- When considering faculty development opportunities, don't just think theoretical but also practical. Look for conferences that engage you in pedagogical reflection and sharing of best practices. Also look for opportunities for spiritual renewal, whether on extended retreat or weekly book clubs.
- Integrate an Ignatian ritual into your life as a mindfulness practice to consider where you teach and build your academic reputation. Recognize with intention the role you play in the Jesuit intellectual tradition.

Community Engaged Learning Opportunities to Build Ignatian Pedagogy

Because service learning extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community it is uniquely poised to be a site for practicing Ignatian pedagogy. Meaningful community service recognizes the importance of context (historical and actual, personal and other) and engages experience (self and other); through action and reflection this engagement integrates with instruction and evaluation to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Community Engaged Learning furthers course learning objectives across the curriculum while also

fostering the Jesuit value of a social justice consciousness that promotes the common good. Some tips we developed for adding an Ignatian inflection to service learning courses include:

- Think about the explicit connections between your course and departmental objectives, as well as your discipline. Service should not be presented as an "add-on" or a mere sidebar to your course.
- Use the syllabus to explain why this kind of service is a part of the course. Guide students in understanding the relevancy of their work in the community to the course objectives.
- Conceptualize the relationship between the University and the community partner as a reciprocal partnership.
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect upon their experiences, using a variety of mediums.
- Allow students to learn from other class members.

Finally, by way of introducing a longer reflection on a specific outcome of our Ignatian Pedagogy FLC that other AJCU schools can easily reproduce, we offer below the text on the landing page for the digital collection we built and made available in USF's Gleeson Library. In the next issue of JHE, we will provide more detail about the contents and process of building an Ignatian Pedagogy digital collection so other AJCU schools can do the same.

Ignatian pedagogy is a model that promotes the goal of Jesuit education, speaks to the teaching-learning process, addresses the faculty-student relationship, and has practical meaning and application for the classroom. Similar to the process of guiding others in the Spiritual Exercises, faculty who apply Ignatian pedagogy accompany students in their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development. They do this by creating the conditions, laying the foundations, and providing the opportunities for the continual interplay of the student's experience, reflection, and action.

The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm is a practical teaching framework consistent with and effective in communicating the Ignatian values and world view. Faculty, regardless of discipline, can utilize

this approach so that their teaching is academically sound and at the same time formative of persons for others.

As part of the conversation of a year-long faculty learning community on Ignatian Pedagogy, we developed this collection of resources, beginning by collecting all the best information already assembled by ACJU (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities) schools. We have added items of special interest for and by USF faculty. We invite colleagues to contribute their relevant work to the Practicing Ignatian Pedagogy Collection. [http://www.usf.edu/ignatian](#)